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PR 7840

The
CLIFFORD BROWN
Big Band in Paris

Art Farmer, Quincy Jones, Jimmy Cleveland,
Gigi Gryce, Clifford Solomon, Henri Renaud,
Alan Dawson and others.



PRESTIGE HISTORICAL SERIES
Original **1953** Recordings



PRESTIGE 7840

The CLIFFORD BROWN Big Band in Paris

A comet that flashed across the jazz horizon and left in its wake some stardust forever shimmering in the atmosphere: that was Clifford Brown.

Four months shy of 26 when he left us, his recorded legacy spans only some four of those brief years. Yet even a time such as ours, which has little use or honor for the past, honors Clifford Brown.

This is the third and final album in a series documenting a happy, hectic episode in Brownie's young life—some three weeks in Paris during a European tour with Lionel Hampton's band. On the first album, *The Clifford Brown Quartet in Paris* (Prestige 7761), Mark Gardner gives a lovingly detailed account of Brownie's career and contributions highly recommended to all as a bonus to go with the music anyone interested in the record here at hand will also want.

Further informative background is provided by Ira Gitler on the second item in the set, *The Clifford Brown Sextet in Paris* (Prestige 7794)—as well as, of course, more beautiful music.

Thus, there is little for me to add except details specifically related to the music here contained.

The big-band date that opens the album was the second of the Paris sessions. As my colleagues have mentioned, Hampton had ordered his men not to record outside the band—an edict several of them, including Brownie, had already happily ignored some weeks earlier in Sweden. I'd like to add here only that such orders were not uncommon, and that Hamp was probably guided in this decision by his business manager-wife, Gladys, Women's Libbies to the contrary notwithstanding, *cherceze la femme* is a wise saying.

Be that as it may, almost the whole Hampton trumpet section, two of the trombones, three of the reeds, and the drummer showed up in the studio to join a bunch of French cats assembled by pianist Henri Renaud, the mastermind behind these sessions. The arrangements—one by Gigi Gryce, the other by Quincy Jones (a third piece recorded that day, *Deltitnu*, has no solo by Brown) were probably things these two had done for Hamp (big bands always have lots of charts that never get played), unless they were whipped up in haste, of which they show no signs.

The occasion marked the recording debut of a young drummer from Boston who was to make quite a name for himself in the decade to come: Alan Dawson. He is not well recorded, but well enough to indicate that the wonderful beat that was to spark so many things to come already was much in evidence.

If Dawson was a budding star, trombonist Jimmy Cleveland here stood on the threshold of fame. It was during this tour with Hampton (whom he'd joined in 1949) that the jazz world began to take notice of this brilliant musician. Today, the circle is complete, and far too little is once again heard from him, though he keeps busy with studio work.

Quincy Jones, of course, is riding high, though Hollywood rather than Jazzville is where he makes his home these days. At this writing, he is planning to take out a big band again, and if he can keep up with the Jonesy of this album—a fresh young talent that soon had everyone taking notice—he'll be alright.

Of Gigi Gryce, Messrs. Gardner and Gitler have spoken at length. He is, next to Brownie, the most heavily featured soloist on this album—not always an unmixed blessing.

Also heard in several solo spots is tenorist Clifford Solomon, of whom I know little. In 1953, he made a heavily r&b flavored date under his own name for Okeh, with Gryce and Max Roach in the band. I suspect that r&b is where he came from and where he returned. His work here ranges from Wardell Gray/Dexter Gordon-influenced to sort of Brother-ish, and doesn't do any harm.

Others, heard in glimpses (guitarist Jimmy Gourley, a more or less permanent expatriate American) or doing backup and section work, acquit themselves honorably. Except for Dawson on one date and Quincy's piano comping on another, the rhythm sections are French, and do not suffer from the then customary European deficiency in swing. Viale, in fact, is a very good drummer, and Michelot would soon become one of the best bassists on the Continent.

All present, American or French, were no doubt inspired by Brownie. His playing was a revelation, and even his Hampton colleagues, after all, had not had much time to really get acquainted with him—he'd joined the band only just prior to the tour.

His impact was immediate and lasting. To Art Farmer, for example, two years his senior and already a finished trumpeter, he became both inspiration and frustration. For a while, Brownie had a pronounced influence on Art, and though the style today is quite removed from

CLIFFORD BROWN, ART FARMER, QUINCY JONES, WALTER WILLIAMS, FERNAND VERSTRAETE, FRED GERARD, trumpet; JIMMY CLEVELAND, BILL TAMPER, AL HAYES, trombone; GIGI GRyce, ANTHONY ORTEGA, alto sax; CLIFFORD SOLOMON, HENRI BERNARD, tenor sax; HENRI JOUAT, baritone sax; HENRI RENAUD, piano; PIERRE MICHELOT, bass; ALAN DAWSON, drums.
(Recorded September 28, 1953)

Side A

1. BROWNSKINS (Take 1) 6:04
2. BROWNSKINS (Take 2) 6:07
3. KEEPING UP WITH JONESY (Take 1) 7:05
4. KEEPING UP WITH JONESY (Take 2) 6:27

CLIFFORD BROWN, ART FARMER, QUINCY JONES, WALTER WILLIAMS, trumpet; JIMMY CLEVELAND, AL HAYES, BENNY VASSEUR, trombone; GIGI GRyce, ANTHONY ORTEGA, alto sax; CLIFFORD SOLOMON, ANDRE DABONNEVILLE, tenor sax; WILLIAM BOUCAYA, baritone sax; HENRI RENAUD, piano; PIERRE MICHELOT, bass; JEAN-LOUIS VIALE, drums.
(Recorded October 9, 1953)

Side B

1. BUM'S RUSH 3:10

CLIFFORD BROWN, trumpet; JIMMY CLEVELAND, trombone; GIGI GRyce, alto sax; CLIFFORD SOLOMON, tenor sax; HENRI RENAUD, piano; JIMMY GOURLEY, guitar; PIERRE MICHELOT, bass; JEAN-LOUIS VIALE, drums.
(Recorded October 10, 1953)

2. CHEZ MOI 7:50

CLIFFORD BROWN, trumpet; JIMMY CLEVELAND, trombone; GIGI GRyce, ANTHONY ORTEGA, alto sax; CLIFFORD SOLOMON, tenor sax; WILLIAM BOUCAYA, baritone sax; QUINCY JONES, piano; MARCEL DUTRIEUX, bass; JEAN-LOUIS VIALE, drums.
(Recorded October 11, 1953)

3. ALL WEIRD (Take 1) 5:17
4. ALL WEIRD (Take 2) 1:55

Personnel and date as for CHEZ MOI, above:

5. NO START NO END 3:57

Brownie's explosive and joyous brightness, it left a mark. In the exchanges between the two on *Keeping Up With Jonesy* (to me, one of the highlights of the album), there can be little question of who sets the pace.

The second big band session, with somewhat different personnel, yielded two pieces. Brownie does not solo on *Quick Step*, but *Bum's Rush*, a Quincy Jones chart, is graced by some lovely trumpet.

The octet and nonet dates produced exceptional playing from the trumpeter, and of special interest is the fact that *All Weird* is also his own composition and arrangement. Later, he would demonstrate a burgeoning talent for composition (consider *Joy Spring*, *Daahoud*, and *Sandu*), but this, as far as I know, is the only example of his scoring for a larger ensemble.

How gifted was this young man—then not quite 23—in every way: as an inspired, completely personal soloist; as a marvelously accomplished instrumentalist; as a composer and arranger, and last but not least, as a human being loved by all who were lucky enough to know him. It is easy to speak well of the dead, but even during his lifetime, not anyone had a bad word to say about him.

Yes, Sweet Clifford had it all. Even in the annals of a music as fraught with personal tragedies as jazz, the death of Clifford Brown—in a stupid, senseless accident in which he played no active part—is uncommonly grim; a meaningless waste that could cause even the most sanguine and hopeful among us to doubt that life, ultimately, has purpose and sense.

His death was, in a way, also the end of the music we know as bebop. He was the last great, natural, inspirational improviser produced by the

soul of Charlie Parker and his disciples, and the band in which he finished his life on earth was the last of the great bebop bands—the Clifford Brown-Max Roach Quintet.

After that, the scene moved in different directions. To be sure, Clifford had a direct and enormous influence on young trumpeters to follow: Freddie Hubbard and Lee Morgan in particular. But they, and the times, inevitably took the music somewhere else.

Speculations of this sort are idle, but is it not possible that Brownie could have sustained a new lease on life for bebop? He had the warmth, that certain magic, without which such revitalization is impossible—and he had everybody listening. He had love. And he was just getting started.

What he left us is precious. Stranger things have happened in jazz, and his music will still be here for someone to pick up on when the time comes. And until that time, the music will always hold that promise, and have the undiminished warmth of life. And that is the only thing that, finally, makes sense: the music of Clifford Brown, even as imperfectly as we can now know it, partakes of immortality.

Brown Skins is a fantasy on the changes to *Cherokee*, a tune that was (and is) a proving grounds for jazz players. Brownie had recorded it just a month before on his own date in New York, and he was to do it again with his and Max Roach's group, but this is the definitive version. Gigi Gryce's chart (the composer credit, Basheer Qusim, is Gigi's new name), opening with a rhapsodic rubato passage, then breaking into tempo, is an excellent showcase for the trumpeter, who is the only soloist. Take 1 is the better, more finished version—as throughout this series of albums, the take numbers shown are those indicated by French Vogue, the original label, and used on previous issues of this material. Without question, however, take 1 always means the best (preferred) version, not the first in order of recording.

Keeping Up With Jonesy is a relaxed, swinging Quincy chart with ample blowing spaces for the soloists. Renaud leads off after the ensemble intro, bopping gently on the pretty jazz changes (*Moonglow* is my guess). A full ensemble chorus features excellent work by the saxophones and good brass, and then Brownie and Art Farmer, both with Harmon mutes, trade first eights, then fours, through two lovely choruses of elevated discourse. A fine Cleveland solo (dig the bridge) is followed by alto and ensemble, then Cliff Solomon's tenor enters with a *Last Time I Saw Paris* quote for a half-chorus, then ensemble out. A well-balanced performance. Take 2 is obviously a warmup—the tempo is a bit faster and not as right. (Alternate takes often, among other things, yield insight into the importance of proper tempos.) The solos, generally, are less inspired, but Cleveland's is a gas, and Solomon's probably a mite better—he starts with the same quote, by the way.

Bum's Rush has an ensemble flavor reminiscent of Dizzy's big bands and the second Herman Herd. Brownie's solo has that crisp, brilliant sound—his chops were up that day. Gryce has time problems—his phrasing is often from Bird, but his rhythm is based on an older style, and trouble sometimes ensues. A Lee Konitz influence sometimes crops up in his phrases, too.

Chez Moi is a French pop tune with changes eminently suited for jazz blowing. The nice arrangement, probably by Gryce, opens with some of his best alto of the date, followed by Brown-led ensemble, two choruses each by trumpet (lovely), tenor (in a different bag than his *Jonesy* solo; is it really the same man?), trombone (fleet) and alto (not bad), and one chorus apiece by Gourley and Renaud. A warm track.

All Weird, as mentioned above, is Brownie's own composition and arrangement. The voicings reflect a Tadd Dameron influence—and Brownie had, of course, worked and recorded with the great composer-arranger. Gryce's convoluted solo doesn't quite get off the ground (the changes are complex), but Clifford warms up to his task. There's a point where you'll think he's going to stop, but that's when he really gets it together! Quincy's comping, by the way, isn't at all bad.

Take 2 is an excerpt, no doubt from an earlier run-through, consisting of Brownie's solo only. It breaks down after some interesting music has been made at a much slower tempo than the final version.

A bonus for the collector, *No Start No End*, finally, is an excerpt from an un-numbered take of *Chez Moi*, again of Brown's solo only. Here, you can tell he's getting acquainted with the tune—the feeling is almost casual. Viale does some of his best drumming behind him; Brownie took him on a trip... as he will you.

Notes: Dan Morgenstern (November 1970)
(Editor, *Down Beat Magazine*)
Reissue produced by DON SCHLITTEN



THE CLIFFORD BROWN BIG BAND
IN PARIS / 1953

CLIFFORD BROWN

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SIDE 1

1. BROWN SKINS (Take 1)
Qusim-ASCAP 6:04
2. BROWN SKINS (Take 2)
Qusim-ASCAP 6:07
3. KEEPING UP WITH JONESY (Take 1)
Jones-ASCAP 7:05
4. KEEPING UP WITH JONESY (Take 2)
Jones-ASCAP 6:27

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SIDE 2

1. BUM'S RUSH
Jones-ASCAP 3:10
2. CHEZ MOI
Goffin/King/Revil/Simille-BMI 7:50
3. ALL WEIRD (Take 1)
5:17
4. ALL WEIRD (Take 2)
1:55
5. NO START NO END
3:57

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